



# Carnegie Shul Chatter

January 9, 2020

## Shabbat Shalom



### The Greatest Blessing

May God bless you and guard you.

May God show you favor and be gracious to you.

May God show you kindness and grant you peace.

What a wonderful blessing. What wonderful thoughts.

We live in a world in which anti-Semitic attacks, like the recent attack on a Rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, have become all too common.

What more can we ask for than that God blesses us and guards us from all who want to do us harm, that He favors us and is gracious to us, and that He shows us kindness and, please, please, please, that He show us peace.

## Who Were Those Guys?

Did you ever bless your children on Friday evening? Did you ever wonder why when you blessed your daughters you said, "May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah," our matriarchs, but when you bless your sons you say, "May you be like Ephraim and Menashe," rather than Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our patriarchs.

And who exactly are Ephraim and Menashe?

In this week's parshah, Vayechi, we learn that Ephraim and Menashe are Joseph's sons, Jacob's grandsons, and before his death, Jacob blesses them, elevating them to the status of his own sons as progenitors of tribes within the nation of Israel.

So why do these grandchildren of Jacob deserve such lofty status?

Below is an explanation from [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com).

# Blessing the Children

By Tamar Fox

Many Jewish parents embrace the custom of blessing their children on Friday evening. This custom is a nice way of bringing gratitude and spirituality into your family. On Shabbat and at other special occasions, it can contribute to a special feeling of closeness between you and your children.

The words of the blessing are taken from the priestly blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) and the introduction is altered depending on whether the child being blessed is a boy or girl.

For boys, the introductory line is:

*May you be like Ephraim and Menashe.*

For girls, the introductory line is:

*May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah.*

For both boys and girls, the rest of the blessing is:

*May God bless you and guard you.*

*May God show you favor and be gracious to you.*

*May God show you kindness and grant you peace.*



The blessing is performed differently in every family. In some traditional homes, only the father blesses the children. In other families, both parents give blessings — either together and in unison, or first one parent, followed by the other. In some homes the mother blesses the girls and the father blesses the boys.

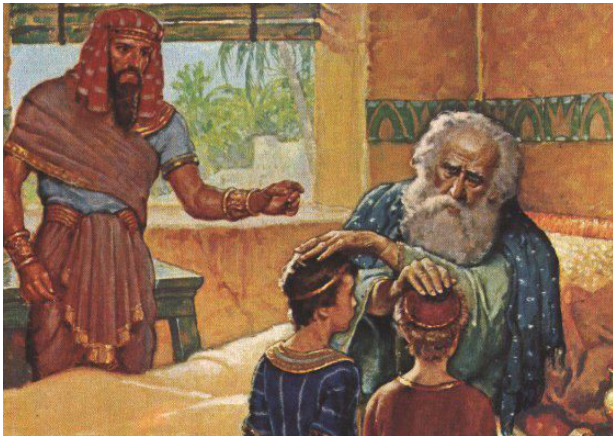
Usually the person giving the blessing places one or both hands on the child's head. Some parents bless each child in succession, working from oldest to youngest. Others bless all of the girls together, and all of the boys together.

After the blessing, some parents take a moment to whisper something to their child — praising him or her for something he or she did during the week, or conveying some extra encouragement and love. Almost every family concludes the blessing with a kiss or a hug.

There are also different customs as to when the blessing is recited. Some families bless their children immediately before or after Kiddush. Others prefer to bless just after lighting the Shabbat candles. In some families with grown children who no longer live at home, this blessing is imparted over the phone on Fridays.

## Why Ephraim and Menashe?

It seems strange that the blessing for boys singles out Ephraim and Menashe instead of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — or, for that matter, any other great biblical leaders who were men (Joseph, Moses, King David, King Solomon). A few answers have been proposed.



The view most commonly held is that of contemporary Israeli Rabbi Mordechai Elon who wrote that Ephraim and Menashe are the first pair of brothers in the Bible who do not see each other as competitors. They do not struggle for power, and their dynamic as a family never seems to be the source of great difficulty in either of their lives. By blessing our children to be like Ephraim and Menashe we seek to bestow upon our children the legacy of peace and harmony between brothers.

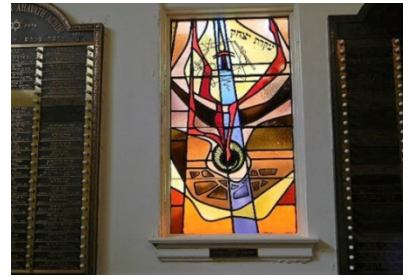
Another interpretation, by 19th-century Israeli Rabbi Shmuel Hominer, notes that Ephraim and Menashe grew up in Egypt, unlike the patriarchs who all grew up in Israel. Ephraim and Menashe maintained their distinct identity as Israelites, even though they lived in a place where they were surrounded and outnumbered by the Egyptians and their gods. The ability to remain faithful to Judaism, even when it is a struggle, is a legacy that we want to pass on to our children.

## Special Occasions

Beyond the weekly blessing on Friday nights, many parents recite this blessing on special occasions, such as at a child's brit milah or naming ceremony, bar or bat mitzvah, and wedding. Any important milestone in a child's life, from the first day of school to birthdays, to the day they graduate high school or college, can be appropriately marked with this blessing.

## Yahrzeit Plaques

Commemorate a loved one by dedicating a yahrzeit plaque in his or her memory at the Carnegie Shul. These beautiful plaques, mounted on the sanctuary walls, are lit on the loved one's yahrzeit, Yom Kippur, and days when Yizkor is recited. The names are also read aloud from the Bimah during services on the Sabbath of the yahrzeit and on Yom Kippur. To purchase a plaque, for only \$175, please email Mike Roteman at [mr-mike7777@yahoo.com](mailto:mr-mike7777@yahoo.com).



## Sponsor a Kiddush



Please consider sponsoring a Kiddush in honor or in memory of a loved one, for only \$36. Your sponsorship will be announced from the bimah and in the weekly Chatter. To sponsor a Kiddush, email [mrmike7777@yahoo.com](mailto:mrmike7777@yahoo.com).